

December 15, 2021

Dan Schulman
President and CEO, PayPal
2211 N 1st St
San Jose, CA 95131

Dear Mr. Schulman,

We write to express concern about PayPal's role in the spread of COVID-19 disinformation. As you know, more than 700,000 Americans have died from COVID-19. The majority of these deaths have come after the approval of safe, free, and effective vaccines. Throughout this pandemic, it is our opinion that your company has played a role in financing vaccine disinformation spreaders. We believe PayPal should consider banning the use of its online payments system on websites that perpetuate dangerous lies about COVID-19 treatment and immunization.

President Biden has called upon social media platforms to take responsibility for any role they play in the spread of disinformation. The Center for Countering Digital Hate published its [Disinformation Dozen](#) report that cites the websites of the National Vaccine Information Center (NVIC) (Barbara Loe Fisher, Joseph Mercola), Organic Consumers Association (OCA) (Joseph Mercola), and the Informed Consent Action Network (ICAN) (Del Bigtree) as leading contributors to COVID-19 disinformation. As of this writing, all of these websites process donations to their organizations through PayPal, as well as major credit cards. While PayPal is not the sole payment system for these websites and individuals, we believe the platforms would have fewer available funding mechanisms without access to PayPal technology to process donations.

These websites promote recommendations that nonpartisan public health institutions like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have stated could result in severe disease and death. One Mercola article claimed that hydrogen peroxide—which the CDC says can cause gastrointestinal embolism and respiratory paralysis if ingested¹—can “successfully treat most viral respiratory illnesses, including coronavirus.” This article was shared on Facebook thousands of times. Moreover, ICAN and the NVIC have claimed the virus is a hoax and that the vaccines are deadlier than the disease itself. For reference, the CDC has yet to detect any patterns for deaths following immunization. We are concerned that PayPal funds this disinformation by providing a means by which the owners of these platforms can collect payments.

PayPal and other leading financial technology companies have already banned payments to entities that spread disinformation. After the deadly insurrection on January 6, Stripe ceased

1

<https://wwwn.cdc.gov/TSP/ToxFAQs/ToxFAQsDetails.aspx?faqid=305&toxid=55#:~:text=Ingestion%20of%20dilute%20solutions%20of,blood%20vessels%20by%20air%20bubbles>).

processing donations to the Trump Campaign. PayPal deactivated the accounts of some groups that were coordinating payments to support the rioters' actions on Capitol Hill.² We believe that PayPal's deactivation of the accounts of the "Disinformation Dozen" would not be an attempt to curb free speech, but rather a decision consistent with the company's previous actions to protect public safety.

We appreciate your full and fair consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

Jake Auchincloss

² <https://techcrunch.com/2021/01/09/the-deplatforming-of-a-president/>